

# 16

## Modal verbs (1)

### *can, could, may, might, be able to*

Modal verbs can be confusing for learners because individual modal forms can be used to express a number of different meanings. This unit looks at the modals we use to describe ability and possibility, to make deductions, arrangements, suggestions and offers, and to ask for and give permission. (For the use of *can* and *could* with sense verbs ► 1.3C; for the use of modal verbs in conditional sentences ► Unit 10.)

#### 16.1 ABILITY

**16.1A** We use *can* to describe an ability and *cannot* or *can't* to describe a lack of ability in the Present and future

*She **can** speak Spanish but she **can't** speak Italian.*

If the present ability is surprising or involves overcoming some difficulty, we can also use *is/are able to*:

*Despite his handicap he **is able to** drive a car.*

❗ We cannot usually use *be able to* with a passive:

✗ *This book ~~is able to be used~~ by complete beginners.*

✓ *This book **can be used** by complete beginners.*

To emphasise the difficulty or to suggest a great effort (in the present, past or future) we use *manage to*. In more formal English we can also use *succeed in + -ing* form:

*Do you think she'll **manage to** get a visa?*

*The army **succeeded in** defeating their enemy.*

To describe a future ability we use *will be able to*, not *can* (but ► 16.3, 16.4):

✗ *~~Can I speak fluently by the end of the course?~~*

✓ ***Will I be able to** speak fluently by the end of the course?*

We also use *be able to* where *can/could* is grammatically impossible, for example:

*I **haven't been able to** drive since I dislocated my wrist. (with the perfect aspect)*

*We love **being able to** talk the local language. (with -ing forms and infinitives)*

Another form for *not be able to* is *be unable to*. It is more common in formal English:

*The lawyer **was unable to** persuade the jury of her client's innocence.*

We use *can* (present) and *could* (past) before sense verbs (► 1.3C):

*I think I **can smell** something burning in the kitchen.*

**16.1B** We use *could* to describe the possession of an ability in the past:

Past *Mozart **could** play the piano at the age of five.*

❗ To describe the successful use of an ability on a specific occasion we do not use *could*, we use a past tense or *was/were able to*:

✗ *~~Mike's car broke down but fortunately he **could** repair it.~~*

✓ *Mike's car broke down but fortunately he **was able to** repair it.*

But we can use *could* in questions, and in sentences with limiting adverbs such as *only* or *hardly*:

*'**Could** you fix the computer yourself?' 'No, I **could only** back up the key files.'*

*She was so exhausted she **could hardly** speak.*

We use *couldn't* or *was/were not able to* to describe a lack of ability or success:

Mozart **couldn't** speak French.

Despite being a mechanic, Mike **couldn't** fix his car when it broke down yesterday.

We use *could/might have* + past participle to describe a past ability which wasn't used or a past opportunity which wasn't taken. The meaning is similar to 'would have been able to' (compare the use of these forms in the third conditional ► 10.5):

She **could have paid** by credit card but she preferred to use cash. (= She had the ability to pay by credit card but she didn't use it.)

I **might have gone** to university after leaving school but I chose to get a job instead. (= I had the opportunity to go, but I didn't take it.)

We often use these forms to make a criticism:

You **might/could have told** me about the party! (= You had the chance to tell me but you didn't.)

We can use *couldn't have* + past participle + comparative adjective when we want to emphasise a past action or feeling:

They **couldn't have tried harder** to make me feel welcome. (= They tried very hard.)

I **couldn't have been more pleased** when I heard about your results – congratulations! (= I was very pleased.)

## 16.2 POSSIBILITY, DEDUCTION AND SPECULATION

**16.2A** We use *can* to describe things which are generally possible (we know they sometimes happen):

Drinks in restaurants **can** be very expensive. (= Drinks are sometimes expensive.)

In scientific and academic English we use *may* in the same way:

Over-prescribing of antibiotics **may** lead to the rapid development of resistant strains.

To talk about specific possibilities we use *may*, *might* and *could* (but not *can*). The meaning is similar to 'perhaps' or 'maybe':

✗ ~~There **can** be life on Mars.~~

✓ There **may** be life on Mars. (= Perhaps there is life on Mars.)

The rash **could** be a symptom of something more serious. (= Maybe it is a symptom ...)

We use the same forms when we are making a deduction based on evidence or on our experience:

He always wears smart suits. He **could** be a businessman.

'Why isn't she here yet?' 'I don't know. The train **may** be running late.'

We can use *well* after *may*, *might* and *could* if we think the possibility is quite strong. (If we are very certain of the possibility, we use *must* ► 17.5.)

Don't worry, the contract **could well** be in the post. (= It is probably in the post.)

To describe possibilities which depend on certain conditions we use *could* or *might* (► 10.4A):

She **could** learn much more quickly if she paid attention. (= She would be able to learn more quickly if she paid attention.)

We use *can* or *could* (but not *may*) to talk about specific possibilities in *wh*- questions or with adverbs such as *only* or *hardly*:

✗ ~~Who **may** that be at this time of night?~~

✓ Who **can/could** that be at this time of night?

Where **can/could** that noise be coming from?

It **can/could hardly** be the postman, he only comes in the morning.

It **can/could only** be Steve. He's the only one with a key.

We use *might* for a more tentative (less direct) question:

***Might** the losses be due to currency fluctuations?*

We use *can't* or *couldn't* for things which we know are impossible and to make negative deductions:

*You **can't** get blood out of a stone.* (I'm sure about this, it's impossible.)

*He **couldn't** be a doctor, he isn't wearing a white coat.* (I'm certain he isn't ...)

We also use this form to say that something is impossible because we are unwilling to do it:

*I **couldn't** pick up a spider; they terrify me.*

When we think that something is possibly not the case we use *might not* or *may not*:

*The shops **may not/might not** be open today; it's a bank holiday.* (Perhaps they are not open.)

❶ In spoken English we often contract *might not* to *mightn't*. We don't usually contract *may not*.

### 16.2B We use *could* to talk about general possibility in the past (things which sometimes happened):

*Teachers **could** be very strict at my old school.* (Sometimes they were strict.)

In scientific and academic English we use *might* in the same way:

*Wealthy Victorian families **might** keep as many as a dozen indoor servants.*

We use *could/might have* for a specific past possibility:

*She **might have** done it; she had the opportunity and the motive.* (Perhaps she did it ...)

*John **could have** posted the letter.* (I'm not sure whether he did or not.)

We also use *might have* for a past opportunity which we know was not taken

(▶ 16.1B).

*I **might have** gone to drama school, but my parents wouldn't let me.* (I had the opportunity but I didn't go.)

We express a negative deduction about the past with *can't have* or *couldn't have*

(▶ 17.5):

*She **can't have** fixed the computer, it's still not working properly.* (I'm sure she didn't fix it.)

When we are less certain we use *may not have* or *might not have*:

*We'd better phone them, they **might not have** heard the news.* (Perhaps they haven't heard the news yet.)

We often use *can't have* or *couldn't have* to express surprise or disbelief:

*She **couldn't have** done it; she's such a nice woman.*

### 16.2C If we are certain that something will be possible or impossible in the future we can use Future *will/won't be able to*:

*We'll **be able to** travel to the moon, but we **won't be able to** travel to Mars.*

For predictions which are less certain we use *may*, *might* or *could*. *Could* usually describes a weaker possibility than *may* or *might*:

*The directors **may** call a stockholders' meeting.* (Perhaps they will call a meeting.)

*You never know, she **could** meet someone suitable tomorrow.* (It's possible, but unlikely.)

We sometimes use *may/might have* + past participle to talk about a possible completed action by a time in the future (similar to the future perfect ▶ 4.1D):

*Call me next Tuesday; I **might have finished** the project by then.*

## 16.3 ARRANGEMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, OFFERS, ETC.

**16.3A** We use *can*, *could* or *be able to* to describe possible arrangements for a time in the future:  
Arrangements

*The doctor **could** see you at six; he **can't** see you before then as he's too busy.  
I'll **be able to** see you after the lesson.*

If the arrangement is uncertain we use *may* or *might*:

*The dentist **might** be free to see you immediately after lunch; I'll have to check the diary.*

*I'm not sure if I'm available; I **may** be working that weekend.*

**16.3B** The choice of modal verb for suggestions, offers and requests depends on the formality of the situation. *May* and *might* tend to be more formal and tentative than *can* and *could*:  
Suggestions, offers and requests

less formal	DEGREE OF FORMALITY	offers	requests	suggestions
		<i><b>Can</b> I help you?</i>	<i><b>Can</b> you close the window?</i>	<i>We <b>can</b> try that new café.</i>
		<i>We <b>could</b> do that for you.</i>	<i><b>Could</b> you pass me the salt?</i>	<i>You <b>could</b> lose some weight.</i>
		<i><b>May</b> I help you?</i>	<i>You <b>might</b> get me some milk while you're there.</i>	<i>You <b>might</b> give John a ring.</i>
more formal		<i><b>Might</b> I be of some assistance?</i>		

We use *can/could* always for an alternative or more tentative suggestion:

*We **could** always go to the Italian place.*

When we want to make a suggestion with the meaning 'there is no better choice available', we can use the phrase *might as well*:

*Now the children have left we **might as well** sell the house and get something smaller.*

## 16.4 ASKING FOR AND GIVING/REFUSING PERMISSION

**16.4A** We use *can/can't* for permission granted or refused by the person being asked and for permission subject to some external authority such as the law:  
Present/future

*'**Can** I use your phone?' 'Yes, of course you **can**./No, I'm afraid you **can't**.'  
(I give/refuse permission.)*

*You **can't** smoke on the underground. (The law doesn't allow you to do this.)*

In more formal situations we can use *may* and *may not* in the same way:

***May** I interrupt?*

*Candidates **may not** bring calculators into the examination room.*

We use *could* or *might* to ask for permission in a more tentative way (*might* is very formal):

*Excuse me, **could** I leave my coat here?*

***Might** I ask the court for an adjournment at this point?*

**16.4B** To describe general permission in the past we use *could/couldn't*:

Past *In the 1950s British children **could** leave school at the age of fourteen.*

But to talk about permission on a specific occasion in the past, we do not use *could*, we use *was/were allowed to*:

*~~X I **could** leave early yesterday.~~ ✓ I **was allowed to** leave early yesterday.*

Pages 198 and 199 for Round up of modal verbs

# Practice

The key to these exercises is on page 361.

## 1 16.1

Choose a suitable form of **can, could, be able to, manage to or succeed in** to complete the sentences below.

- 1 The manager of the shop was a bit reluctant but in the end I ..... get a refund.
- 2 It was really annoying; I ..... get on to any of the websites you recommended.
- 3 What's her phone number? I ..... remember it.
- 4 Although Stephanie is deaf and mute she ..... communicate with the aid of a special computer.
- 5 They finish the new motorway next month so we ..... get to the coast much more quickly.
- 6 Most of the big hotels were full, but we ..... find a room in one of those small guesthouses near the station.
- 7 Would you speak more slowly? I ..... follow what you're saying.
- 8 I really appreciate ..... speak to you so frankly about this.
- 9 After I move to the country I'm not going to ..... visit you so often.
- 10 Over the last few months the government's fuel tax levy ..... generating over a billion pounds in revenue.
- 11 This new mobile phone is fantastic. It ..... be used anywhere in the world.
- 12 The shopping channel is a real boon for Liz; she adores ..... buy clothes at any time of day or night!
- 13 I ..... walk properly since I had that skiing accident.
- 14 Sadly, many of the indigenous people ..... resist the diseases brought by the European settlers.
- 15 The non-fiction section ..... be found on the third floor of the library.

## 2 16.1, 16.2

Match the situations (A–D) with the sentences (1–4).

- A Samantha is going to work at a ticket agency next year.  
 B Judy went to the theatre yesterday and told the box office clerk that she was a theatre critic.  
 C Liz went to the theatre yesterday to buy some tickets. They didn't tell her about the special 'free ticket' offer.  
 D Carol works at a ticket agency.

- 1 She was able to get free tickets.
- 2 She can get free tickets.
- 3 She will be able to get free tickets.
- 4 She could have got free tickets.

A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐

## 3 16.1, 16.2

Match the two parts (1–4 and A–D) to form sentences.

- |                         |                                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 He could do it        | A – he had plenty of opportunity.   |
| 2 He couldn't do it     | B – he wasn't even in the country.  |
| 3 He might have done it | C – he seems a very capable person. |
| 4 He can't have done it | D – he doesn't look old enough.     |

Finish each of the following sentences in such a way that it is as similar as possible in meaning to the sentence printed before it. You must use a suitable form of *can*, *could*, *may* or *might* in each sentence. The exercise begins with an example (0).

- 0 I was absolutely thrilled when I heard about your engagement.  
I *couldn't have been more thrilled when I heard about your engagement.*
- 1 I'm very angry with you – you knew I was having problems with the car and you didn't bother to help me!  
You .....
- 2 Twenty years ago my neighbour offered me his apartment for \$30,000 but I didn't buy it.  
Twenty years ago I .....
- 3 It would be possible for us to issue the tickets today if you gave us your credit card number.  
We .....
- 4 The service in British restaurants is sometimes quite surly.  
The service .....
- 5 Might the disparity in the figures be due to a computer error?  
Is it .....
- 6 Don't worry, they'll probably be on the next train.  
They .....
- 7 I'm certain he isn't responsible for the error; he looks too experienced.  
He .....
- 8 Perhaps the shuttle bus isn't working at the moment – it is the low season.  
The shuttle bus .....
- 9 It's so annoying. You knew their phone number but you didn't give it to me!  
You .....
- 10 I'm afraid it isn't possible to grow bananas in the British climate.  
Unfortunately, you .....
- 11 Given some luck, our team has a good chance of winning the championship next month.  
With any luck .....
- 12 Perhaps Jim took it; he was in the office all day yesterday.  
Jim .....
- 13 It's possible that the results will have arrived by tomorrow lunchtime.  
The results .....
- 14 Who do you think is making all that noise next door?  
Who .....
- 15 Perhaps there are other intelligent life-forms in the universe.  
There .....
- 16 Thanks to satellite technology, it is now possible to predict hurricanes quite accurately.  
We .....
- 17 The lights are off so maybe he isn't at home.  
He .....
- 18 With a little bit of luck my sister has the potential to be a huge star.  
My sister .....
- 19 They offered Carrie a job in New York, but she didn't want to work there.  
Carrie .....
- 20 I would never be able to live in a house without a garden.  
I .....

Complete the following article by writing the missing words. Use no more than two words for each space. The exercise begins with an example (0).

The worst experience of my life? I (0) .....~~can~~..... remember it as if it were yesterday.

I was staying at a beautiful hotel on the coast. My room was on the second floor. It was about two o'clock on my first night when I suddenly woke up. There was a very strong smell of burning but I (1) ..... tell where it was coming from. I jumped out of bed, ran to the door and opened it. I (2) ..... see smoke coming from the staircase. I suppose I (3) ..... tried to run down the stairs, but I knew I wouldn't have made it. It was impossible, the smoke was too dense, I (4) ..... got further than the first landing before choking.

I went back into my room, slammed the door behind me and ran to the window. I had to escape. I (5) ..... jumped out of the window but I felt too scared. It was too high, I needed something to climb down. Suddenly I had a brainwave and ran over to the bed. By tying the bedsheets together I (6) ..... make a kind of ladder. I tied one end of the sheets to the foot of the bed and I threw the other end out of the opened window. Despite my fear of heights I (7) ..... climb out onto the window ledge. A small group of people had gathered on the ground and were shouting encouragement to me.

'Come on,' they said, 'you (8) ..... do it!' I was shaking with fear, but by refusing to look down and concentrating on the rope in my hands I eventually (9) ..... lowering myself from the ledge. Very slowly, putting one hand below the other, I (10) ..... climb down the bedsheet rope to safety.

## 6 16.3, 16.4

Choose the correct description, A or B.

- 1 They allowed me to bring my dog.  
A They usually allow dogs.      B They don't usually allow dogs.
- 2 The doctor could see you at eleven.  
A I'm not sure if she's free at eleven.      B I'm suggesting a time for an appointment.
- 3 Might I borrow your calculator for a moment?  
A Talking to your best friend.      B Talking to a clerk at the bank.
- 4 Well, we could always go on the bus.  
A I don't really mind how we get there.      B I really want to go on the bus.
- 5 I could wear anything I liked.  
A When I worked as a secretary.      B On the day I took my secretarial exams.
- 6 We can have a look at the shops.  
A I'm making a suggestion.      B I'm describing a future ability.
- 7 May I interrupt?  
A At a formal business meeting.      B At a family lunch.
- 8 You may not bring drinks into the auditorium during the performance.  
A It's up to you to decide.      B It's forbidden.
- 9 I might see you after the show.  
A I probably will see you.      B I'm not sure if I'll see you or not.
- 10 We might as well go straight home.  
A There's nothing better to do.      B I really want to go home.

Fill the gaps in the dialogue using a suitable form of *can, could, may, might, be able to, manage to* or *succeed in* and a form of the verb in brackets. The exercise begins with an example (0).

- MIKE     So how are the wedding arrangements going, Jane?
- JANE     Not too bad. We're seeing the vicar tomorrow so Harry and I (0) ...*will be able to ask*... (ask) him about hiring the church hall for the reception.
- MIKE     It would be great if you (1) ..... (get) that place, it's an ideal venue.
- JANE     Yes, I know. Although it (2) ..... (be) a bit too small if all our friends turn up!
- MIKE     It holds about a hundred people, doesn't it?
- JANE     Well, in fact it (3) ..... (accommodate) up to a hundred and twenty-five, apparently. But there are about a hundred and forty on our guest list. It's a bit of a Catch-22 situation because I (4) ..... (not/invite) people until the reception is organised, but I (5) ..... (not/organise) a venue until I know how many people are coming!
- MIKE     Some of Harry's cousins live in the States, don't they?
- JANE     Yes. I'm not sure if they're coming. It's quite an expensive trip so they (6) ..... (not/make) it over here. But I'm hoping at least some of them will come.
- MIKE     They (7) ..... (always/get) one of those cheap charter flights. I've seen a lot of them advertised on the Internet recently.
- JANE     Oh, I think Harry (8) ..... (tell) them about that already. He said he'd sent them some Internet links.
- MIKE     What about catering? Have you made any plans yet?
- JANE     I've arranged something with *Quality Caterers* in the High Street.
- MIKE     Oh, I wish I'd known that before! I (9) ..... (speak) to Liz Brown for you when I saw her last Tuesday. She's the manager there and she goes to the same tennis club as me. You never know, I (10) ..... (even/get) you a discount!
- JANE     That's a pity. Still, they've given us a pretty good deal. By the way, Mike, there is one favour I wanted to ask you.
- MIKE     Sure. What is it?
- JANE     (11) ..... (we/borrow) your video camera?
- MIKE     Of course. You (12) ..... (have) the tripod as well, if you like.
- JANE     Harry dropped his camera when we were in Tenerife. And since we've been back he (13) ..... (not/find) anyone around here to fix it.
- MIKE     What about music at the reception? Are you going to get a band?
- JANE     No, we (14) ..... (not/have) live music at the church hall, it doesn't have a licence. But we (15) ..... (have) a disco.
- MIKE     You (16) ..... (always/ask) Jackie Branson, she's got one of those mobile disco things.
- JANE     I didn't know that! I (17) ..... (speak) to her about it yesterday – she was at my aerobics class. I thought she'd given up disc-jockeying ages ago.
- MIKE     Well, I suppose she (18) ..... (give/it/up) when the kids were very young, but I'm pretty sure she's back doing it now.
- JANE     I expect she'll be at the aerobics class next week; so I (19) ..... (ask) her about it then. Oh, that reminds me. Harry wondered why you weren't at football practice on Wednesday.
- MIKE     It's that awful car of mine – it just wouldn't start on Wednesday. Luckily, Jim down the road (20) ..... (fix) it, although it took him two hours!



# Modal verbs (2)

*must, should, ought to, have to, need to*

English has a number of different ways of expressing the concepts of obligation and necessity, prohibition, recommendation and logical deduction. This unit looks at the different modal verbs, as well as some common non-modal verbs and phrases, which we use to express these concepts. (For other modal verbs ► **Units 16 and 18**).

## 17.1 OBLIGATION AND NECESSITY

### 17.1A

Forms

	<i>must</i>	<i>have (got) to</i>	<i>need to</i>	<i>should/ought to</i>
<b>present</b>	<i>must</i>	<i>has/have (got) to</i>	<i>need/needs to</i>	<i>should/ought to</i>
<b>past</b>	<i>had to</i>	<i>had (got) to</i>	<i>needed to</i>	<i>should/ought to have (done)</i>
<b>future</b>	<i>must</i>	<i>will have to</i>	<i>will need to</i>	<i>should/ought to</i>

*Must*, *should* and *ought to* are modal verbs (unlike *need to* and *have to*). They do not change form in the present tense, nor do they have a past tense or a future form with *will*, nor infinitive or participle forms. As an alternative to *must* or when we can't use *must* (e.g. to refer to the past), we usually use *have to*:

- Past: *The staff and students at the university **had to** evacuate the campus.*
- Future: *The Council **must/will have to** find ways of cutting costs next year.*
- Infinitive: *It's difficult **to have to** stand by and watch your child in pain.*
- Participle: ***Having to** listen to hip-hop music all evening is my idea of torture!*

We can express a past meaning of *should* and *ought to* by using a modal perfect:

*They really **should/ought to have consulted** their shareholders first.*

*Need* can be used as a modal verb (without *to*), usually in negatives and questions:

***Need** you shout so? I'm right next to you!*

*We **needn't** bother making the bed. The maid will do it.*

As an alternative to *need*, we can use *need to* or *have to*:

***Do you need to/have to** shout so?*

*We **don't need to/have to** bother making the bed.*

We can use *must*, *have to* and *need to* with a passive phrase:

*Democracy **must/has to be seen** to work.*

*Pulses **need to be cooked** thoroughly to eradicate the toxins in them.*

### 17.1B

Obligation

We usually express obligation in English with *must* or *have to*:

*You **must** arrive in good time for the meeting tomorrow. The MD will be there.*

*Everyone **has to** register their name and address in order to be able to vote.*

The difference in meaning between *have to* and *must* can be fine and often depends on whether or not the speaker sees the obligation as one they are imposing. We use *have to* to express an obligation we see as outside our control, e.g. rules imposed by an authority:

*Students **have to** wear school uniforms in the sixth form.*

We often use *must* to express an obligation imposed by the speaker:

*I **must** get up earlier – I waste so much time in the mornings.*

*Must* is commonly used for the following situations:

- To give a strong personal opinion: *I believe people **must** vote at elections.*
- To impose an obligation on oneself: *I really **must** lose some weight.*
- To give instructions: *The electricity **must always be switched off** before repairs are attempted. (In giving instructions, *must* is often used with a passive verb.)*

❶ However, *must* expresses a strong obligation and we do not often use it in face-to-face conversation as it can seem impolite and often inappropriate.

We often use *should* and *ought to* as an alternative to *must* as they express a subjective (often moral) obligation felt by the speaker, but the obligation is weaker than with *must*:

*You **should** treat your neighbours with more respect.*

It is possible to use *need to* to express external obligation, particularly in the future:

*We'll **need to** get our visas sorted out or we won't be able to stop over in the States.*

We use *have got to* for external obligation like *have to*, but it is more informal than *have to* and more common in speech than in writing (*have got to* is rare in US English):

*What time **have** we **got to** be at the airport tomorrow?*

[Claim forms **have got to** be date-stamped before payment will be made.]

✓ Claim forms **have to** be date-stamped before payment will be made.

We use *should/ought to* + *have* + past participle for an unfulfilled obligation in the past:

*You really **should have/ought to have** registered before term started.*

*The record was finally released eighteen months later than it **should have been**.*

**17.1C** We can use *need to*, *must* and *have to* to express necessity (i.e. a requirement that results from things other than just commands, rules or laws):

*All living beings **need to/must/have to** take in sustenance in order to live.*

*I really **need to/must/have to** get some more sleep. I'm always exhausted.*

❶ It is possible, though quite rare today, to use *need* without *to* in questions:

***Need** he really play his music so loudly?*

If we want to express a necessity without suggesting who should deal with it, we can use *need* + *-ing* form: *That poor bird – his cage really **needs cleaning**.*

This use has a passive meaning and is similar to the passive infinitive (► 8.2B):

*That poor bird – his cage really **needs to be cleaned**.*

**17.1D** We can use *be to* for an order from a person in authority (► 5.1A):

*The members of the jury **are to** report to the judge's chambers.*

Other ways  
of expressing  
obligation

We use *be obliged to* (US: *obligated to*) or *required to* in formal contexts:

*We're **obliged to** contribute twenty-five per cent of the costs of the repairs.*

*Motorists **are required by law to** wear seat belts in the European Union.*

We use *be supposed to* for a lesser obligation and one that is frequently ignored:

*We're **supposed to** leave our textbooks at school, but we often take them home.*

We use *be liable to* for obligation (often in a legal context):

*Anyone causing damage **will be liable to** pay for all necessary repairs.*

## 17.2 PROHIBITION AND CRITICISM

17.2A Forms	<i>must not</i>	<i>cannot</i>	other forms	<i>should not/ought not to</i>
present	<i>mustn't</i> ( <i>have</i> )	<i>can't</i>	<i>may not</i> <i>is/are not allowed to</i>	<i>shouldn't</i> <i>oughtn't to</i>
past		<i>couldn't</i>	<i>was/were not allowed to</i>	<i>shouldn't have (done)</i> <i>oughtn't to have (done)</i>
future	<i>mustn't</i>	<i>cannot</i>	<i>may not</i> <i>will not be allowed to</i>	<i>shouldn't</i> <i>oughtn't to</i>

**17.2B** We use *must not* (usually *mustn't*) to express a prohibition (an obligation not to do something) imposed by the speaker or writer:

*You **mustn't** touch that kettle. It's hot!*

To express a weaker, often moral prohibition, we use *shouldn't* or *oughtn't to*:

*You really **shouldn't/oughtn't to** speak to your mother like that!*

We tend to use *shouldn't* more often than *oughtn't to*.

To express prohibition by an external authority we often use other modal verbs or non-modal expressions. *Mustn't* may appear too strong in these situations:

Guests **may not** use the pool after 11 p.m. (formal ► 16.4A)

Women **can't/aren't allowed to** drive in some Arab countries. (► 16.4A, B)

❗ It is possible, though not common, to use *must not have* + past participle for a present prohibition which relates to the past:

Entrants **must be aged 16 to 25 and must not have done** any professional modelling.

(The modelling is in the past, but the prohibition is in the present.)

We use *couldn't* or *wasn't/weren't allowed to* for prohibition in the past:

We **couldn't** go into the disco because we were too young.

Journalists were shown the disused buildings but they **weren't allowed to** enter them.

We use *shouldn't/ought not to have* + past participle to criticise a past action:

You **shouldn't have driven** through that red light. You could have caused an accident.

We usually use *won't be allowed to* or *can't* to express prohibition in the future:

Let's eat before we go. We **won't be allowed to/can't** take food into the auditorium.

### 17.3 ABSENCE OF OBLIGATION OR NECESSITY

#### 17.3A

##### Forms

	<b>not have to</b>	<b>need not</b>
<b>present</b>	<i>do/does not have to</i>	<i>need not, do/does not need to</i>
<b>past</b>	<i>did not have to</i>	<i>did not need to, need not have (done)</i>
<b>future</b>	<i>will not have to</i>	<i>will not need to, need not</i>

#### 17.3B

##### Meaning and use

We usually use *don't have to/don't need to* to express a lack of external obligation:

✗ You ~~**mustn't** pay to visit most museums in Britain.~~

✓ You **don't have/need to** pay to visit most museums in Britain. (Entrance is free.)

We use *don't need to/needn't* for absence of necessity felt by the speaker. *Needn't* tends to express the speaker's personal opinion more:

We **needn't/don't need to** put the heating on yet; it's not cold enough.

We use *didn't have to/didn't need to* for absence of obligation in the past:

You **didn't have to/didn't need to** finish the washing-up. I could have done it.

❗ *Need* has two past forms: *didn't need to* and *needn't have done*. We use *didn't need to* when we don't know if the action happened or not:

We **didn't need to** take warm sweaters, as the weather was so good. (We don't know if the speaker took warm sweaters or not.)

We use *needn't have* + past participle when the action happened but was unnecessary:

We **needn't have taken** warm sweaters. We could have used the space in our luggage for more books! (We know that the speaker took warm sweaters.)

We use *won't have to, won't need to* or *needn't* for absence of obligation in the future:

With one of the new generation of food processors, cooks **won't have to/won't need to/needn't** peel or chop any more.

### 17.4 RECOMMENDATION AND ADVICE

#### 17.4A

##### Forms

	<b>must</b>	<b>should</b>	<b>ought to</b>	<b>had better</b>
<b>present</b>	<i>must (not)</i>	<i>should (not)</i>	<i>ought (not) to</i>	<i>had better (not)</i>
<b>future</b>	<i>must (not)</i>	<i>should (not)</i>	<i>ought (not) to</i>	<i>had better (not)</i>

#### 17.4B

##### Meaning and use

We use *must* for strong recommendations and advice:

You really **must** read Sebastian Faulks's latest book. It's stunning!

You **must** do something about that cough. Please go and see the doctor.

Note that with this use *must* is usually heavily stressed in speech.

Recommendation or advice with *should* or *ought to* is less emphatic:

*Even people as young as twenty-five **should** consider a personal pension.*

*Children **ought not to** spend long periods in front of a computer screen.*

We often use *should* and *ought to* with the passive:

*The underlying shift in public opinion **ought not to** be exaggerated.*

*Had better (not)* expresses the best thing to do in a particular situation. It often has a sense of urgency and can be a warning or a threat:

*If the burglars took your keys, you'd **better** change the locks in case they come back.*

*Your dog **had better not** dig up my rose bush again!*

## 17.5 LOGICAL DEDUCTION AND PROBABILITY

### 17.5A

Forms

	<i>must</i>	<i>have (got) to</i>	<i>should</i>
<b>present</b>	<i>must</i>	<i>have (got) to</i>	<i>should (not)</i>
<b>past</b>	<i>must have + past participle</i>	<i>had (got) to</i>	<i>should (not) have + past participle</i>
<b>future</b>	<i>must</i>	<i>have (got) to</i>	<i>should (not)</i>

In this sense, we can also use *must*, *have to* and *should* with the continuous:

*That disco is so loud. You **must be damaging** your ears when you go there.*

*You **have got to be joking!** That was not a foul!*

*The accused **should not have been driving** at 80 in a built-up area.*

### 17.5B

Meaning and use

We use *must* for something that we believe to be true because of evidence (i.e. we are making a logical deduction):

*This **must** be the place – it's the only restaurant in the street.*

*I thought the eclipse was today, but it **must** be happening tomorrow.*

The opposite of *must* in this sense is *can't*, not *mustn't* (► 16.2A):

*This **can't** be the place – there's no one inside and there are no lights on.*

It is possible to use *have (got) to* for emphatic logical deduction:

*There **has (got) to** be some mistake. I didn't order this furniture.*

We use *must have + past participle* to express a logical deduction about the past:

*There was a terrific noise last night. It **must have been** an explosion.*

*I couldn't wake you this morning. You **must have been** sleeping really soundly.*

The negative of this is *can't/couldn't have + past participle* (► 16.2B).

Note the difference between the two past forms *must have + past participle* and *had to*:

*The Corrs' new single has been played non-stop. You **must have heard** it! (deduction)*

*I've always loved The Corrs and when I heard they had a new single out, I **had to** hear it! (obligation imposed by the speaker)*

We use *should/ought to* for probability and *shouldn't/ought not to* for improbability. (For probability with *may* and *might* ► 16.2.) We believe the statement to be true because of our prior knowledge, experience or present evidence:

*The plane **should** be landing about now.*

*There **shouldn't** be problems with traffic at that time of the evening.*

❗ We rarely use *should* to 'predict' a negative (unpleasant) situation. Instead we use *will*:

✗ *There **should** be problems with traffic at that time. The roads **should** be awful.*

✓ *There'll be problems with traffic at that time. The roads **will** be awful.*

We use *should (not)/ought (not) to + have + past participle* to talk about the probability of an action in the past:

*I don't know where our main speaker can be. He **should have arrived** hours ago.*

► Pages 198 and 199 for Round up of modal verbs

# Practice

The key to these exercises is on page 362.

1

## 17.1

Complete the dialogue with the best words or phrases from the box. Use each word or phrase once only.

do I have to    had to    has to    have to    having to    must  
need to    needs    obliged to    should    supposed to    will have to

- BETH Hello. Reception said that you wanted a word with me.
- LISA That's right. I'm interested in joining your gym. What (1) ..... do?
- BETH Take a seat. First, you (2) ..... fill in this form. It asks for details about you and your state of health. We want to be sure that you're fit enough to use the gym.
- LISA OK ... I have a slight problem with one knee. I twisted it a few weeks ago.
- BETH Well, you really (3) ..... tell the instructor about that, then he'll make sure that your fitness programme takes account of it.
- LISA Fitness programme?
- BETH Yes. If you join, you (4) ..... have an induction session with one of our fitness instructors. He'll design a programme suited to your level of fitness.
- LISA Oh, that's good. Now, it's £30 a month, isn't it?
- BETH Well, yes, but that's the special rate if you take out an annual subscription, so you're (5) ..... join for the whole year to get that rate. Otherwise it's £40 a month.
- LISA I see. Yes, I think I'll join for the year. Is there anything else I should know?
- BETH Let's see ... there are some rules, but they're pretty obvious. Of course, everyone (6) ..... wear appropriate clothes and footwear. There are lockers outside the gym, so you're not (7) ..... take anything in with you, but we don't apply that rule very strictly. You'll probably want to take a towel and a bottle of water in with you anyway: you (8) ..... drink plenty of water while you're exercising, to prevent dehydration.
- LISA Yes ... are there any restrictions, like (9) ..... book time ahead in the evenings?
- BETH No. You can use the gym whenever it's open. Obviously, if you think a piece of equipment isn't working properly and (10) ..... mending, tell an instructor. Also, for your own good, you (11) ..... tell us if you feel unsure about how to use a particular machine.
- LISA Of course. Now, the receptionist said I (12) ..... provide a photo for the membership card, but I'm afraid I don't have one on me.
- BETH That's OK. Bring it next time you come. Until then you can use your receipt as proof of membership.

2

## 17.1-17.3

Read the letter on the next page and decide which word or phrase below fits each space. In each case, only one answer is possible. Circle the letters you choose. The first one is given as an example (0).

- |                     |                   |                     |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 0 A must not        | B cannot          | © need not          |
| 1 A need not have   | B must not have   | C had to            |
| 2 A mustn't have    | B shouldn't have  | C needn't have      |
| 3 A could not       | B did not need to | C needed to         |
| 4 A are to          | B are obliged to  | C aren't allowed to |
| 5 A must not        | B are liable to   | C must              |
| 6 A are required to | B do not have to  | C need to           |

- |                           |                       |                      |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 7 A need not              | B do not need to      | C have to            |
| 8 A need to               | B do not have to      | C must not           |
| 9 A are not supposed to   | B are not obliged to  | C need not           |
| 10 A had to               | B will have to        | C are to             |
| 11 A shouldn't be allowed | B oughtn't be allowed | C needn't allowing   |
| 12 A need not have been   | B must not have been  | C did not have to be |

## *Hilverstone Fox Watch*

Dear New Member,

Many thanks for your application form for membership of the HFW (Hilverstone Fox Watch). Before I introduce the club to you, I would like to point out that you (0) ... pay your subscription until your membership application has been processed and approved, so those of you who joined at the fete last Saturday (1) ... provided cheques on the spot. Our representative (2) ... accepted your cheques. I am returning them where necessary, with apologies for any inconvenience.

HFW was set up three years ago for two reasons: to lobby for the abolition of fox-hunting – the founder members felt we (3) ... do this as the Hilverstone Hunt is so powerful in this area – but also to provide some protection for the urban foxes here, who (4) ... subsist on household scraps in some cases. Our meetings are fortnightly but please do not feel that you (5) ... attend each one. All our members, however, (6) ... attend six meetings a year and at least two all-night watches. We (7) ... insist upon this to prevent all of the work from falling on the shoulders of a few people.

One or two words of advice: a lot of people interested in foxes attempt to domesticate them by putting food down for them. Please – you (8) ... do this. For one thing, we (9) ... encourage vermin under local by-laws (and foxes are classed as vermin), but also, we (10) ... try to reintroduce these foxes to their natural habitat, as they are not naturally domestic creatures. Please remember also that female foxes with young cubs can be quite aggressive: children in particular (11) ... to go near them at this potentially dangerous time.

Finally, may I remind you that members of HFW (12) ... involved in the Hilverstone Hunt for at least one year prior to joining.

Thank you once again for your interest. I enclose a timetable of our meetings and events for the next three months, and look forward to welcoming you to one of them.

Yours faithfully,  
Jonathan Harker

Complete texts A–C with an appropriate verb or expression. Use the information in the box to help you. The first one is given as an example (0).

#### REQUIREMENTS OF COURSE

course	important	advisable	unnecessary
A	keyboard skills	access to a computer	prior publishing experience
B	previous experience	keyboard skills	own computer
C	three GCSEs	good level of English	prior publishing experience/computer skills

#### A DESK-TOP PUBLISHING

Ten-week intensive course for people interested in producing small-scale publications. Applicants for this course (0) *must* have good keyboarding skills but are not (1) ..... to have prior publishing experience. If possible, applicants (2) ..... have access to a computer and Microsoft Publisher, but there are a limited number of machines available at the college.

#### B DESK-TOP PUBLISHING

Learn how to self-publish from the professionals! We offer Desk-top Publishing courses to suit all schedules and budgets, from five-week intensive courses to year-long evening courses. You (3) ..... have your own computer (on our full-time courses) but you (4) ..... have some previous experience in publishing. You (5) ..... be able to use a keyboard. Call us on 01202 867349

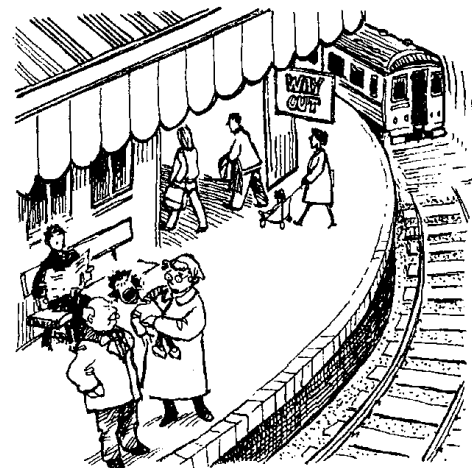
#### C DESK-TOP PUBLISHING

One-year course. Applicants (6) ..... have previous experience in publishing, as part of the course involves work experience with a local printing company. Equally, you are not (7) ..... to have good computer skills as all basic training is provided. A minimum of three GCSEs is (8) ..... and applicants (9) ..... have a good level of English.

#### 4 17.5

Write four statements making deductions about each picture. Use the words and phrases underneath the pictures. The first one is given as an example (0).

- 0 (daughter) They must *be waiting for their daughter.*
- 1 (on/train) She can't .....
- 2 (miss/it) She must .....
- 3 (child/mother) She must .....
- 4 (phone/parents) She can't .....



- 5 (rain) It must .....
- 6 (slip/banana skin) The man must .....
- 7 (not/wife) She can't .....
- 8 (ambulance) Someone must .....

For each of the sentences below, write a new sentence as similar in meaning as possible to the original sentence, but using the word(s) given. The word(s) must not be altered in any way.

- 0 It looks certain that the orchestra's instruments are arriving on a later plane.  
must ..... *The orchestra's instruments must be arriving on a later plane.* .....
- 1 I strongly recommend you to try this sundried tomato bread.  
must .....
- 2 There is no obligation to get an international driving licence for this country.  
have .....
- 3 It was stupid of the government to try to break the strike.  
should .....
- 4 I warn you not to chat up my girlfriend again!  
had .....
- 5 We didn't book the table but it didn't matter as there was hardly anyone in the restaurant anyway.  
need .....
- 6 My hair's much too long. I'll have to get it cut soon.  
cutting .....
- 7 It is essential that you disconnect the gas supply before removing the boiler.  
be disconnected .....
- 8 The management will not permit latecomers to enter the theatre until there is a suitable break.  
allowed .....
- 9 Why do we have to state ethnic origin on official forms these days?  
required .....
- 10 There can be no doubt that the solicitor has received the information by now.  
must .....
- 11 It probably won't be difficult to get tickets for the first night.  
should .....
- 12 It is essential that patients have not eaten or drunk anything for three hours before the operation.  
must .....

## 6 ALL

Underline six more mistakes to do with modal verbs or expressions from this unit, then correct them.

### Minutes of Holmeffield NeighbourCare meeting

- 1 Sergeant Dibden reminded us that we don't have to tackle a burglar if one ..... *mustn't* .....
- 2 enters our home as this can be very dangerous. He also reminded us that we .....
- 3 are supposed by law to inform the police and our insurance companies of all .....
- 4 keyholders after a break-in. ....
- 5 Mrs Sanders from Twyfield Close reported that she had been burgled two .....
- 6 afternoons before. The burglar should have got in through an open downstairs .....
- 7 window, although at that time of day there must be plenty of people .....
- 8 around who witnessed the break-in. You'd better report it to the police if you .....
- 9 saw anything as it's our civic duty. ....
- 10 Mr Harrison from Dukes Avenue was concerned that he hadn't taken up an .....
- 11 invitation from a security company to assess his house for security risks, but he .....
- 12 was relieved to discover from Sergeant Dibden that he needn't have invited .....
- 13 them anyway, as the police can do security checks. ....
- 14 Finally, remember, if you need speak to a police officer, you can call Sergeant .....
- 15 Dibden at Holmeffield police station at any time. ....



# Modal verbs (3)

## *will, would, shall*

Learners of English often think of *will* as a way of expressing the future (► **Unit 4**) and of *would* as a word which is used mainly in conditional sentences (► **Unit 10**), but we use both of these modal verbs to express a number of other meanings. This unit also looks at *shall* which, although it is the least-used modal in English, we can use to express a variety of meanings.

### 18.1 PREDICTION AND CERTAINTY

- 18.1A** Predictions about the future  
We use *will/won't* to make predictions about the future (► **4.1A**):  
*He's been found guilty of murder. He'll be in prison for a long time.*  
*You must work hard for this exam. It **won't** be easy.*
- 18.1B** Past predictions about the future  
Sometimes we wish to express a prediction about the future that someone made in the past. For this we often use *would/wouldn't* (*would* is the past form of *will*):  
*We had to hurry to get him to the hospital. We knew it **would** be too late otherwise.*  
This use of *would* is related to the use of *would* in reported speech (► **9.2E**):  
*I'm sure the Lions **will** win the rugby series this year.* → *She was sure the Lions **would** win the rugby series.*
- 18.1C** Certainty about the present  
We make confident 'predictions' about the present based on our knowledge or previous experience (or on current expectations) with *will/won't*:  
*'Rachel's in Turkey at the moment.' 'I hope she's taken some winter clothes because it **won't** be warm at this time of year.'*  
Compare this use of *will* and the present simple. We use the present simple to state a fact without expressing an opinion as to the certainty or otherwise of the event:  
*Janet isn't here at the moment. She's in France.* (Fact – the speaker knows it's true.)  
To say that we believe something is certain, we use *will/won't*:  
*It's five o'clock. Janet'll be in Paris now.* (Certainty – the speaker believes it's true.)  
To express a certainty about something ongoing (i.e. where we would use the present continuous for a fact), we use *will/won't + be + -ing* form:  
*Jason is sympathetic because he knows his successor **will be having** a hard time at the moment.*
- 18.1D** Certainty about the past  
To refer to something which we feel certain has happened (but do not actually know), we use *will have + past participle*:  
*We sent the invitations on Monday, so they **will have received** them by now. Why hasn't anyone replied?*  
This is similar to *must have + past participle* (► **17.5B**):  
*We sent the invitations on Monday, so they **must have received** them by now.*  
We use *won't have + past participle* to refer to something which we feel certain has not happened:  
*We sent the invitations by second-class post. They **won't have received** them yet.*  
❶ We do not use *mustn't have + past participle* in this way (► **17.5B**, ► **16.2B**), but we can use *can't have*:  
✗ ~~*We sent the invitations by second-class post. They **mustn't have received** them yet.*~~  
✓ *We sent the invitations by second-class post. They **can't have received** them yet.*

**18.2A**  
Present

We often use *will/won't* to talk about actions that have become so routine that they are predictable:

*Every lesson is the same: he'll sit down, get his books out and then he'll start giving us instructions. He **won't** greet us or show any interest in us.*

We can extend this use of *will* to talk about habits and characteristics:

*The public **will** always side with the nurses in any dispute.*

*The dominant male of the group **will not** tolerate the presence of other males.*

We can also use the present simple to describe characteristics and habits:

*The public always **sides with** the nurses in any dispute.*

*The dominant male of the group **does not tolerate** the presence of other males.*

We often use *will* when talking about the characteristics of capacity or ability:

*The Olympic stadium in Sydney **will** hold 110,000 people.*

*This model **will** do 0 to 100 kilometres per hour in eight seconds.*

It is also possible to use *can* and the present simple for these last two uses with no change in meaning:

*The Olympic stadium in Sydney **can hold/holds** 110,000 people.*

*This model **can do/does** 0 to 100 kilometres per hour in eight seconds.*

We use *will* (not the present simple) to describe an annoying habit or to make a criticism:

*We enjoy going out with Frank and Carol, but they **will argue** in public!*

❗ We do not contract *will* when we use it to describe an annoying habit – we stress it:

✗ *Geoff'll leave the lights on when he's last out of the office.*

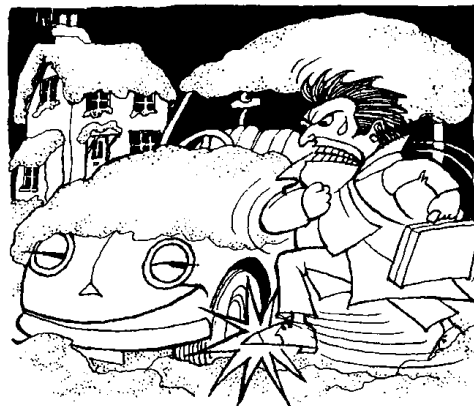
✓ *Geoff **will** leave the lights on when he's last out of the office!*

We often use *will/won't* to criticise inanimate objects in this way:

*Whatever I do, my car **won't** start first time on cold mornings.*

To state a simple fact with no (or little) annoyance, we use the present simple:

*My car **doesn't start/never starts** first time on cold mornings.*



My car won't start first time on cold mornings.

**18.2B**  
Past

We use *would/wouldn't* to talk about habits in the past (► 2.5B):

*Every lesson was the same: he'd sit down and get his books out, then he'd start giving us instructions. He **wouldn't** greet us or show any interest in us.*

We can use *would/wouldn't* to criticise or talk about annoying habits in the past:

*I miss Dad, even though he **would** always tell me how to run my life!*

❗ We do not usually contract *would* to 'd when we use it in this way; we stress it:

*When Alan was a toddler he **would** cling on to me whenever a stranger came in.*

However, we do not always stress *would* when it is followed by an adverb:

*My boss was awful: he'd **invariably** find something for me to do at five o'clock.*

We can use *would/wouldn't* to talk about inanimate objects (► 18.2A):

*The car **would** never start on winter mornings when we were in Sweden.*

## WILLINGNESS AND REFUSAL

- 18.3A** We use *will* to express willingness to do something:  
 Present/future willingness and refusal *The doctor **will** act as a witness to your signature. She doesn't mind doing that sort of thing.*  
 We can use it to express *be willing to*. In this sense, we can use *will/won't* in the *if* clause of a first conditional (► 10.3A):  
*If you'll take a seat for a moment, Mr Franks will be with you soon.* (If you are willing to take a seat for a moment, ...)  
 We use *won't/shan't* to express unwillingness or refusal to do something:  
*The PA **won't** book my flights. She says it isn't in her job description.*  
*'Go and buy some milk, will you, love?' 'No, I **shan't**. I'm busy.'*
- 18.3B** We use *would/wouldn't* to show willingness or refusal in the past. We use *would* in the affirmative only to refer to general willingness (i.e. a habit):  
 Past willingness and refusal *Dad **would** always help us with our maths homework.*  
 Ⓢ We do not use *would* in the affirmative to express willingness to do something on a single occasion in the past:  
~~✗ The tour guide was very helpful. She **would contact** the Consulate for me when I lost my passport.~~  
 ✓ *The tour guide was very helpful. She **contacted/offered to contact** the Consulate for me when I lost my passport.*  
 We can use *would not* for refusal on a single occasion in the past:  
*The shop assistant **wouldn't** change this jumper for me, even though I hadn't worn it.*

## 18.4

## OTHER USES OF WILL/SHALL/WOULD

- 18.4A** We can use both *will* and *shall* to make offers. We use *will* in the affirmative, both to make offers to do something ourselves and on behalf of other people:  
 Offers and promises *Sit down. I'll wash up this evening.*  
*Your car sounds a bit rough. Harry **will** take a quick look at it, if you like.*  
 We use *shall* in questions to make more tentative offers than with *will* in the affirmative:  
***Shall** I wash up this evening?*  
 We use *will* to make promises:  
*My government **will** turn round the economy and reduce unemployment.*  
 We can use *would, will* or *won't* when we offer something to another person:  
***Would** you have/like some more of the pie? (neutral)*  
***Will** you have some more of the pie? (neutral)*  
***Won't** you have some more of the pie? (more encouraging)*
- 18.4B** We use *shall* in questions with *we* to make suggestions:  
 Suggestions ***Shall we** go out for a curry tonight? (= Why don't we ...?/How about ...?)*  
 To ask for suggestions or advice, we can use *shall* with a question word:  
***What shall we** do about Tom if he doesn't get into a university?*  
 US English uses *should* in preference to *shall* for suggestions:  
*Let's decide what to do this evening. **Should we** go bowling?*  
 Ⓢ We use *shall* in question tags after *let's* (► 7.2B):  
***Let's** forget about it now and talk about something else, **shall we**?*  
 Ⓢ We use *would* in suggestions or responding to invitations if we want to be more tentative or distant:  
*It **would** be a good idea to get together one evening.*  
*'Come to dinner on Sunday.' 'That **would** be nice. I'll let you know.'*

**18.4C** Requests We often make requests with *will*. These requests are informal and we usually use them only with people we know quite well (*can* ► 16.3B):

*Will you give me a call when you get to the hotel?*

We use *would* to make requests more tentative or polite, or to request things of people we do not know so well:

*Would you lend me the car tomorrow night, Dad?*

*Would you fill in this form, please, sir? (could ► 16.3B)*

We can make a request more insistent by using *will you* as a question tag:

*Come and look at this, will you?*

If we make a request in this way, we do not expect the answer to be 'no':

*Pick up my suit from the cleaner's when you're out, will you?*

**18.4D** Orders and instructions We use *will* and *shall* for orders and formal instructions. We use *shall* for more formal instructions, especially in official documents:

*You will/shall all stay behind for thirty minutes and clean this room.*

*The secretary shall minute the proceedings of each meeting.*

We also use *shall/will* for rules, for example of examinations and competitions:

*The judge's decision shall be final.*

**18.4E** Disagreeing We can use *would/wouldn't* to show disagreement in a polite way:

*I wouldn't say that.*

*I wouldn't go that far.*

**18.4F** Expressing desires and preferences We often use *would* with verbs of liking and preference (*like, love, prefer*, etc.) to express desires and preferences which we think we can realise:

*We'd love to come to your wedding on 6th September. Thank you for the invitation.*

*I'd prefer to lose weight by a tried and tested method than by a new trendy diet.*

We can use *would* with *rather* to express a preference (► 11.2E):

*Our delegates would rather not stay at the conference centre.*

❗ Note that we can use an object with these forms:

*I would like you to listen to me when I'm talking!*

## 18.5 HYPOTHETICAL WOULD

**18.5A** Hypothetical desires about the present/future We use *would* with *be* or verbs of liking and wishing to express a desire for the present or future. Fulfilment of the desire is impossible or improbable:

*It would be so nice to live by the sea.* (The speaker doesn't live by the sea.)

*I would prefer to be a man.* (The speaker is a woman.)

To state a simple fact, we use the present simple:

*It is nice to live by the sea.*

We can use the present simple (*like*) to talk about something we currently like and do, but we use *would like* to talk about an unfulfilled desire:

*I like to stay in five-star hotels.* (I do stay in five-star hotels and enjoy it.)

*I would like to stay in five-star hotels.* (I don't stay in them, but it's my desire.)

*Wish* + *would* expresses a desire for another person (not) to do something:

*I wish you wouldn't talk with your mouth full!* (► 11.3C)

**18.5B** Hypothetical desires about the past If we want to comment on a hypothetical situation in the past, we use *would/wouldn't* + *have* + past participle:

*It would have been a good idea to notify us in advance of your intentions.*

(= The person did not notify anyone in advance.)

❗ British English often uses the perfect infinitive here (► 13.3A):

*[It would have been a good idea to have notified us in advance ...]*

► Pages 198 and 199 for Round up of modal verbs

# Practice

The key to these exercises is on page 362.

## 1 18.1, 18.2

Complete these dialogues with *will*, *won't*, *would*, *wouldn't*, + *have* if necessary, and a form of the verbs in the box. The first one is given as an example (0).

argue ~~be~~ come have hold prepare say start stop watch work

- 0 'Sue says she's enjoying the job but she's putting on weight.'  
'Yes, that ..... *will be* ..... because of all those long business lunches.'
- 1 'Are you having problems with your new camera?'  
'Yes, the flash ..... in semi-darkness, only when it's fully dark.'
- 2 'Shop assistants used to be more polite, didn't they?'  
'Yes, a few years ago they ..... always ..... "please" and "thank you" and smile.'
- 3 'Surely there are too many people here to get on one plane?'  
'No, a jumbo jet ..... easily ..... over 300 people.'
- 4 'I hope Josh is OK at that summer camp. He might be homesick.'  
'Don't worry about him. He ..... a great time!'
- 5 'Do you think that the jury will acquit Nick?'  
'I hope so. I'm sure that his lawyer ..... a solid defence.'
- 6 'I don't think this new secretary is as good as Janice was.'  
'I don't know. Janice ..... always ..... whenever you pointed out errors in her typing.'
- 7 'The new horse at the riding stables seems to be working out very well.'  
'Quite well, but he ..... and eat whenever he gets the opportunity!'
- 8 'Oh no, I've just noticed a mistake in the headline for the front page article!'  
'Phone the printers. They ..... printing it yet – they don't print until early morning.'
- 9 'What happened after the car broke down?'  
'Well, we knew that traffic ..... along that road so late, so we slept in the car.'
- 10 'Why are you and Jack arguing so much these days?'  
'He takes me for granted. He ..... TV every evening and ignore me completely.'

## 2 18.2, 18.3

Rewrite the underlined parts of this phone conversation, using *will*, *won't*, *would* and *wouldn't*.

- JAKE 020 7543 9216.
- ALICE Hi, Jake. It's Alice here.
- JAKE Alice, how nice to hear from you!
- ALICE Actually, Jake, I'm phoning to ask you for some advice.
- JAKE (0) I'm willing to help you if I can, of course.
- ALICE Your mother receives help from the Council, doesn't she?  
Can you tell me what (1) they agree to do and what  
(2) they don't agree to do for older people?
- JAKE Yes, of course. Mum has a home help. She comes three  
times a week. (3) She's perfectly happy to do light cleaning  
and (4) she's willing to get the shopping, but  
(5) she refuses to do anything heavy.
- ALICE That's fair enough. What about cooking?
- JAKE Well, when she first started (6) she was happy to prepare  
supper when she came, but she stopped that after a few weeks.

*I'll help you*

- ALICE Why was that?
- JAKE You know my mum. (7) She insists on saying exactly what she thinks. Apparently the home help used to make Italian food and Mum didn't like it. (8) She refused to eat it. Why are you asking, anyway?
- ALICE It's Dad. He can't move around very easily now. The neighbours are great, they (9) make a habit of popping in now and again but (10) he's unwilling to ask them for help if he's in trouble.
- JAKE Mmm. You can understand that.
- ALICE Oh, but he's so impatient. I take him to the shops once a week, but yesterday (11) the car refused to start and I was about half an hour late. (12) Was he willing to wait for me? No, (13) he insists on trying to cope by himself! He went to the shops and collapsed on the way there.
- JAKE Oh, dear. It's a worry, isn't it? Look, (14) if you don't mind waiting for a few minutes, I'll look out the phone number for the right person at social services.

### 3 18.4

Complete the dialogues below the pictures. Use *will*, *shall* or *would*.

0



STUDENT 1: *Will you pass me the dictionary, please?*  
STUDENT 2: Yes, here you are.

3



MAN: .....  
WOMAN: Oh, yes, please! We always need someone to take the minutes.

1



WOMAN: .....  
FRIEND: I won't, thanks. I'm trying to lose weight.

4



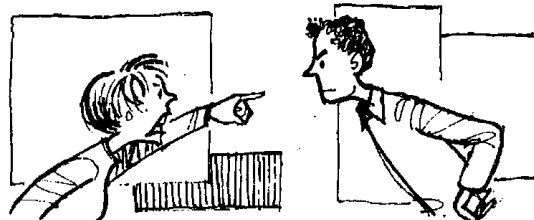
POLICE OFFICER: .....  
THIEF: Come with you? No, why should I?

2



TEACHER: .....  
STUDENTS: Oh, Miss, not another essay for homework! We've already written two this week.

5



MAN: I don't understand what you want from me!  
WOMAN: .....  
MAN: But I do respect you!

Read the article and then decide which word or phrase A, B or C below best fills each space. Circle the letter you choose for each question. The exercise begins with an example (0).

## Words, words, words

The words that caught the mood of the decade are all there in a book published yesterday – *clone*, *concentration camp*, *gene*, *depression* – except that the decade was not the 1990s; these words (0) ... current in the 1900s.

The *Guinness Book of the Twentieth Century* cites lists of buzzwords for each decade of the last century. At the outset of the 20th century, few people would have guessed that it (1) ... more language change than ever before. Of course, before the days of the communications revolution language evolved much more slowly. Many people today (2) ... language not to change at all, but that is an unrealistic dream in the age of the global village.

Words you (3) ... every day, such as *chatline* and *trainers*, (4) ... only thirty years ago. And a word as universal as *teenager* gained common currency only in the 1940s. Words change in meaning too: a scientist in the 1960s (5) ... *clone* to refer only to plants. And anyone who asked '(6) ... we watch the soap tonight?' would have encountered total incomprehension before the Second World War. (*Soap* was what you washed with.)

There is a more worrying side to this, if you consider that new coinage reflects the society it comes from. Only twenty years ago few people (7) ... *stalking*, *ethnic cleansing* or *road rage* – concepts that the world (8) ... perhaps be better without. It (9) ... nice to think that the 21st century (10) ... us happier words, but don't hold your breath!

- |                                    |                           |                         |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 0 (A) would have been              | B would be                | C will have been        |
| 1 A will bring                     | B brought                 | C would bring           |
| 2 A would rather                   | B would prefer            | C will prefer           |
| 3 A will hear                      | B will be hearing         | C will have heard       |
| 4 A would not have been recognised | B would not be recognised | C will not recognise    |
| 5 A wouldn't understand            | B will be understanding   | C would have understood |
| 6 A Won't                          | B Would                   | C Shall                 |
| 7 A shall have understood          | B would have understood   | C will have understood  |
| 8 A would                          | B will                    | C shall                 |
| 9 A will be                        | B would be                | C would have been       |
| 10 A would bring                   | B would have brought      | C will bring            |

## 5 18.4, 18.5

Read the statements from people who have or have had a disadvantaged life. Complete the sentences, expressing the people's desires and regrets about the past. Use the word in brackets.

- 0 We don't have running water in our homes. We have to collect water from the stream or from a pipe in the village. (like)  
Aisha ..... *would like to have running water in her home.* .....
- 1 We live in a wooden shack outside the city. It's very small but eight of us live in it. It's my dream to live in a real house. (prefer)  
Pedro ..... ..
- 2 In my country we have to pay for medicine and a lot of people can't afford it. The government should provide free medicine. (like)  
Esther ..... ..
- 3 Every day I go into the town and I beg in the streets for money. Obviously I don't like going begging, but we need the money. (rather)  
Sun-Li ..... ..
- 4 I wear the same clothes every day. I look at models in magazines and I'm very envious of their beautiful clothes. (be nice)  
Hana thinks it ..... ..
- 5 I live in a village just outside a big city. The village is OK, but rich people from the city come and dump their rubbish in our village. It's dreadful! (wishes)  
Sunil ..... ..
- 6 I didn't go to school. My family couldn't afford to send me. So now I can only get a badly-paid job. It's such a pity, because I enjoy learning new things. (been good)  
Maria thinks it ..... ..

## 6 ALL

There are nine more mistakes in this text connected with the language in this unit. Underline the mistakes and correct them.

- 1 I'll never forget the day my life changed. It was a normal day – in those days I ..... ..
- 2 shall do my homework straight after school so that I could go and listen to pop ..... *would* .....
- 3 music at Janice's after dinner. So I was sitting in front of the fire, trying to keep ..... ..
- 4 warm. Mum was ironing. I looked at the clock. ....
- 5 'Dad's late,' I remarked to Mum. ....
- 6 'It's Thursday. He'd be visiting Granny.' ..... ..
- 7 My grandmother lived in a cold, draughty cottage on the moors. Mum and ..... ..
- 8 Dad wanted her to move in with us, but our house was very small, and she won't. ....
- 9 They knew that the cold winter months would have hastened her death – she ..... ..
- 10 already suffered from chronic bronchitis – but she was a stubborn old woman ..... ..
- 11 who will insist on her independence. ....
- 12 'Won't it be nice if we had some money? We could buy a big house and ..... ..
- 13 Granny could have a flat of her own in it. I hate being poor.' ..... ..
- 14 'Oh, pet, I shan't say we're poor. We're not as well off as some, but we've ..... ..
- 15 got a roof over our heads and food in our bellies.' Mum would always see ..... ..
- 16 the best in every situation. It really annoyed me! 'Will I make a nice cup of tea? ..... ..
- 17 Your Dad would be frozen when he gets in. He'll want to save the bus fare so ..... ..
- 18 I'm sure he's walked all the way from your grandmother's.' ..... ..
- 19 At that moment, the door opened and Dad walked in, waving a slip of paper. ....
- 20 'Forget the tea, Mary. We're going out tonight. First prize in the lottery. ....
- 21 We're rich!' ..... ..



# Round up: Units 16–18

## Modal verbs

function	time	form	example	
ability	present	<i>can</i>	She <b>can</b> speak Spanish but she <b>can't</b> speak Italian.	16.1A
		<i>is/are able to</i>	Despite his handicap he <b>is able to</b> drive a car.	
	past	<i>could</i>	Mozart <b>could</b> play the piano at the age of five.	16.1B
		<i>was/were able to</i>	Mike's car broke down but he <b>was able to</b> repair it.	
possibility	present	<i>may, might, could</i>	There <b>may</b> be life on Mars. The rash <b>could</b> be a symptom of something more serious.	16.2A
	past	<i>could have, might have</i>	She <b>might have done</b> it; she had the opportunity and the motive.	16.2B
	future	<i>will be able to</i>	We'll <b>be able to</b> travel to the moon but we <b>won't be able to</b> travel to Mars.	16.2C
arrangements	future	<i>can, could, be able to</i>	The doctor <b>could</b> see you at six; he <b>can't</b> see you before then as he's too busy.	16.3A
permission	present/future	<i>can, can't</i>	'Can I use your phone?' 'No, I'm afraid you <b>can't</b> .'	16.4A
	past	<i>allowed to</i>	I <b>was allowed to</b> leave early yesterday.	16.4B
obligation	present	<i>have (got) to</i>	Students <b>have (got) to</b> wear school uniform here.	17.1B
		<i>must</i>	I <b>must</b> get up earlier.	17.1B
		<i>need (to)</i>	Do we <b>need to</b> get a visa for the USA?	17.1B
		<i>should</i>	You <b>should</b> respect your neighbours.	17.1B
	past	<i>had to</i>	We <b>had to</b> report to reception by four.	17.1B
	future	<i>will have to, will, need to</i>	We'll <b>have to/ll need to</b> get our visas sorted out.	17.1B
necessity	present	<i>must, have to, need to</i>	All human beings <b>must/have to/need to</b> have enough sleep.	17.1C
	past	<i>had to, needed to</i>	Cave dwellers <b>had to/needed to</b> hunt in order to survive.	17.1C
	future	<i>will have to, will need to</i>	You'll <b>have to/ll need to</b> work harder than that.	17.1C
prohibition	present/future	<i>must not</i>	You <b>mustn't</b> touch that kettle!	17.2B
		<i>cannot, may not</i>	Guests <b>can't/may not</b> use the pool after 11 p.m.	17.2B
		<i>should not</i>	You <b>shouldn't</b> speak to me like that!	17.2B
	past	<i>could not</i>	We <b>couldn't</b> go because we were too young.	17.2B
past criticism		<i>should (not) have</i>	You <b>shouldn't have driven</b> through that red light.	17.2B

function	time	form	example	
absence of obligation or necessity	present	<i>do not have to, do not need to</i>	You <b>don't have to/don't need to</b> pay to visit most museums in Britain.	17.3B
	past	<i>did not have to, did not need to, need not have</i>	You <b>didn't have to/didn't need to</b> finish the job. We <b>needn't have taken</b> sweaters as it was so warm there.	17.3B
	future	<i>will not have to, will not need to</i>	You <b>won't have to/won't need to</b> ask the doctor to sign this form.	17.3B
advice/recommendation	present/future	<i>must should had better</i>	You really <b>must</b> read 'Birdsong'! You <b>should</b> consider a private pension. You'd <b>better</b> change the locks straight away.	17.4B 17.4B 17.4B
	present/future	<i>must, have to cannot</i>	This <b>must/has to</b> be the place. This amount <b>can't</b> be correct.	17.5B 17.5B
	past	<i>must have cannot have</i>	That noise <b>must have been</b> an explosion. She <b>can't have done</b> it – she wasn't even here.	17.5B 17.5B
probability	present/future	<i>should</i>	The plane <b>should</b> be landing now.	17.5B
	past	<i>should have</i>	What's happened to the boys? They <b>should have arrived</b> hours ago.	17.5B
certainty	present	<i>will</i>	It <b>won't</b> be warm at this time of year.	18.1C
	past	<i>will have</i>	They'll <b>have received</b> the invitations by now.	18.1D
routines	present	<i>will</i>	He'll come in and he'll start giving instructions.	18.2A
	past	<i>would</i>	He'd come in and he'd start giving instructions.	18.2B
habits	present	<i>will</i>	The public <b>will</b> always side with the nurses.	18.2A
	past	<i>would</i>	Dad <b>would</b> always tell me how to run my life.	18.2B
characteristics	present	<i>will</i>	The stadium <b>will</b> hold about 110,000 people.	18.2A
	past	<i>would</i>	The car <b>wouldn't</b> start on cold mornings.	18.2B
willingness/refusal	present	<i>will, won't</i>	The doctor <b>will</b> act as a witness.	18.3A
	past	<i>would, wouldn't</i>	The shop <b>wouldn't</b> change this jumper.	18.3B
other functions	present/future	<i>will, shall</i>	I'll wash up this evening.	18.4A
			<b>Shall</b> I wash up this evening?	
		<i>shall</i>	<b>Shall</b> we go out for a curry?	18.4B
		<i>will</i>	<b>Will</b> you give me a call?	18.4C
		<i>would</i>	<b>Would</b> you fill in this form, please?	18.4C
hypothetical desires	present/future	<i>will, shall</i>	You <b>will/shall</b> all stay after school tonight.	18.4D
	present/future	<i>would</i>	It <b>would</b> be nice to live by the sea.	18.5A
	past	<i>would have</i>	It <b>would have been</b> a good idea to notify us in advance.	18.5B